

MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT: POLICY AND PRACTICE

6 December 2007, Central Hall, Westminster, London

This one day workshop, targeting policy makers from across Whitehall, and voluntary sector employees, looked at various aspects of the link between migration, development and the policy process. Presentations by experts in the area were followed by questions set for the participants to mull over and discuss. Participants were divided into three groups, and following discussions, the main points were presented to the plenary.

Migration and Development: Current Thinking

RICHARD BLACK

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There is increasing acknowledgement of the role played by migration both for the prosperity of the destination country, but also for the development and poverty alleviation of the source country. But while we may have moved from thinking of migration as a problem rooted in the failure of development to seeing it as an opportunity, the process still carries costs and risks that are disproportionately borne by the poor. Some of the key questions that need to be addressed in this regard are how to maximise the benefits of migration whilst minimising the risks and costs; how to ensure a coherent approach to migration; and what options are practical and politically-feasible. Richard's presentation assessed possible answers to these questions in terms of three key areas – remittances, skilled migration and migrants' rights.

Remittances have been a stable and growing source of foreign exchange revenue for poorer countries, though remittances include non-financial transfers as well, including human and social capital transfers. The ability to transfer money at low cost has been a critical issue here. What influences remittance behaviour, and what determines how remittances are used, also constitute critical questions from the development perspective.

The *brain drain* is most acutely felt in countries with small populations, as percentage losses are quite high. But stopping people from migrating may not be the answer. Nor does the answer lie in compensating southern countries for these losses, as these are difficult to measure and put a value against. Rather, policy needs to address how conditions might be created that enhance conditions for brain exchange, making it work positively for poorer countries.

The question of *rights* is a more vexed one; it is not clear whether international conventions on the rights of migrants hold hope to improve the conditions of the poor. In the South, there is also the question of whether a rights-based approach could advance the situation of migrants -- e.g. in India, there is a debate ongoing about whether promoting identity cards help (internal) migrants secure rights -- or make them more visible and hence more vulnerable.

Three discussion points were raised. The key points emerging in the plenary are summarised below.

1. Is a focus on 'rights' helpful when looked at from outside the development policy field?
 - The matter of the UK government, for instance, signing the migrant workers' convention, is a politically fraught issue and would involve managing public perception as it would be seen as opening up unlimited access to labour markets. Deportation

would become impossible, and migrants would be allowed to continue to stay and access benefits.

- There might be value in looking at the cost of signing the convention, when weighed against costs currently being incurred for deportation, for instance.
- Issue of UK migrants in other countries
- Some countries that ratified the convention have since become destination countries, which has changed their perception of the convention (e.g. Morocco and Mexico).

2. Are there points of leverage for migration policy where UK's development goals are consistent with UK's domestic/strategic interests?

- More positive public opinion needed, particularly a widening of the scope of the debate. Negative perceptions tend to dominate at the moment, with little sense of perspective on how long-standing an issue migration has been historically, or that migration is not just a question of immigrants – there are also large numbers of Britons migrating abroad
- Getting the balance of interests right is difficult, particularly since development goals are long-term while policies/ ministers' thinking tends to be short-term
- The economics of migration tend to dominate debates, while there are other issues as well, such as social integration. The better integrated migrants are, for instance, the better they are likely to contribute to their origin country.

3. To what extent would including migration and development concerns promote a more mature public debate about international migration?

- Currently there are contradictory positions on migrants – no distinction is made, for instance, between economic migrants and asylum-seekers. It is a racialised discourse with immigrants from poorer countries in the spotlight.
- People are concerned about how migration is affecting them rather than looking at the bigger picture, like the implications for development, for instance.
- It might be helpful to reduce the coverage on migration, rather than have so much negative coverage
- Might be useful to learn lessons from other countries where the debate is possibly more mature, and the attitude to migrants more welcoming

Diasporas and Departments: From Silos to 'Joined-up' Approaches for Common Purpose?

CHUKWU-EMEKA CHIKEZIE

African Foundation for Development

Chukwu-Emeka put 'diaspora engagement' in perspective, arguing that Olaudah Equiano and Sons of Africa were engaging with the British government in the eighteenth century regarding the abolition of slave trade and the fate of London's black poor, though it was never identified by that term.

The migration-development nexus might be conceptualised in terms of the three 'Cs' – coherence, capacity and cooperation. With DFID, this engagement has developed slowly and in bursts. The 1997 White Paper spoke of building diaspora skills, but the matter was no longer taken up again until the 2000 White Paper, which was beginning to rethink the idea of mobility and advocated more research. Since then, there have been a series of events – the formation

of Connections for Development in 2003, the website for sending money home launched in 2005, a study on Black and Minority Ethnic remittances in 2006, and a number of activities, including a DFID 'How to...' note on diaspora engagement in 2007.

Chukwu invited Helen Robson (DFID) to elaborate on the 'How to...' note. She noted that the three concerns for DFID are identifying who the diaspora are, whether those DFID are engaging with might be said to be 'representative', and issues of trust. The rationale for DFID's engagement with the diaspora is itself being thought through, with DFID asking whether there is added value in this for both DFID and the groups concerned, rather than engagement for its own sake. There are a number of government departments working with diaspora groups, and so there is also concern that there might be contradictory approaches or pulls.

Chukwu-Emeka emphasised some of the lessons learned in diaspora engagement: (i) avoid a double agenda of using development policies to curb migration as this is unrealistic and will lead to diasporas shunning development engagement; (ii) set realistic goals. Areas of diaspora engagement could include (i) capacity building support to diasporas; (ii) facilitating and reducing costs of remittance transfers; (iii) supporting diaspora groups own development projects and (iv) facilitating brain circulation.

Chukwu-Emeka set the groups three questions, discussions around which are outlined below:

1. What domestic agendas can be achieved in the context of the migration-development nexus? In other development work, there is an assumption that the government knows what it wants, and it tenders the work that needs being done. But with diasporas, it is trying to understand the diaspora's needs. Diaspora groups may present a comparative advantage with respect to poverty reduction in their source countries on account of their networks, their understanding of needs, their reach, ability to partner with local groups and their preparedness to take risks in their country of origin. Thus, there are micro-level engagement opportunities but the question is whether that comparative advantage will hold for second and third or later generations of migrants. The magnitude of change to be achieved is higher with increased degree of complexity and investments of time – thus, transfer or circulation of skills and resources is the easiest level, but it gets more difficult as one moves from there to organisation, politics and power and new initiatives.
2. What does diaspora engagement look like that works for diasporas, sending countries, and the UK? While it is legitimate for separate government departments to engage on different issues with diasporas, there is always the danger that one department could undercut the achievements of others.
3. What outcomes could be achieved and how? The outcomes could be both a better development policy, and the learning itself from diaspora groups.

Turning the Tide? Why Development will not Stop Migration

HEIN DE HAAS

International Migration Institute, University of Oxford

The regular and irregular movement of less-skilled migrants is seen as a matter of concern, a problem in need of control, which has resulted in increasingly restrictive policies over the years. However, temporary migration has not stopped since the 1970s; it has rather changed its face, with a diversification of migration methods and routes. Temporary migration has a tendency to lead to permanent settlement; there is migration through other channels such as family reunion;

and there is increased irregular migration (though there are no reliable estimates available of volumes). However, there has been no relative increase in migration – it has merely been in proportion to the increase in populations worldwide, though there has been a reorientation of migration flows, with more flows from the South to the North.

Several 'smart solutions' have been proposed to deal with migration, on the assumption that increased development would reduce migration. These have taken the form of aid, trade, return migration, remittances and diaspora involvement, and circular migration (perceiving migration as a medicine against migration). However, there are practical concerns here, including the limited scope and effectiveness of aid; limited enforceability of circular or temporary migration for the low-skilled; and protectionist trade policies are inconsistent with development. Furthermore, development and migration are complementary phenomena rather than substitutes for each other, particularly bearing in mind that migrants are rarely from the poorest communities, and development generally coincides with increased migration, as both ability and aspirations increase. We need to see migration as part of a global developmental process instead of a problem to be solved

Plenaries following discussions highlighted that migration should be neither a goal nor a tool in development policies, but a relevant factor that must be borne in mind. For instance, to address issues around livelihoods, policies are needed that take migration into account.

Development and progress in some areas is leading to some forms of return (e.g. India and Ireland), but on the whole the process of migration is particularly well lubricated today by ease of travel and communications. Attempts at providing information on legal channels for migration, however, do often fail as it is a question of the credibility of those giving information – friends and relatives would be trusted over governments or multilateral bodies.

Discussions around circular migration emphasised the conflict that can be inherent in return with those staying behind, and the difficulties in enforcing circularity.

Migration and the Policy Process

RON SKELDON

Sussex Centre for Migration Research

The complicating factor in any policy is that it could potentially have an impact on movement or migration. Thus, it might be argued that a migration impact statement is needed when making policies, together with direct migration policies for better managing internal and international migration. Direct migration policies usually take four forms – immigration and emigration policies; humanitarian policies; integration and assimilation policies; and migration and development policies.

Migration policy, however, is far from being a homogeneous entity. A wide range of government departments could be dealing with it, and it will depend on which department is calling the shots. Indeed, the relationship between policy and state structures has never been static – as migration regimes change, policies change too. Contrary pulls work on the process – thus, there might be a demand for open borders and trade, but satisfying domestic worries might entail closing the borders.

Is there a convergence or divergence in migration policies around the world? What we see emerging now is a convergence as there is:

- a move towards encouraging the migration of the skilled
- a growing gap between intentions and outcomes of migration policy (e.g. in the case of 'temporary' migration)
- intention to close borders in the context of liberal spaces

Economies are aging, but there is no change being effected in migration policies, as these continue to not permit settlement, as in East Asia.

Ron set two questions for the groups: how to create an effective database; and what migration policies are of the greatest priority for UK governments and why.

The groups stated that there are databases providing information on asylum statistics, work permits and family reunion. What is missing, however, is information on people leaving, and movements within the EU. The latter potentially has an impact on funding for local authorities.

Migration policies by the UK government are seen primarily as being reactive and knee-jerk. However, the Border and Immigration Agency does have a set of strategic objectives (April 2007) which include: compliance with laws; boosting the economy; enforcement of borders and fast-track asylum decisions. Community cohesion is also emerging as a key concern.

Migration and Development: Current Thinking

FRANS BOUWEN

The Hague Process On Refugees and Migration

Frans opened by emphasising that The Hague Process attempts new approaches to think about and be active in regards to international migration. The Process is built on 21 Principles. On the basis of these declared principles he highlighted two initiatives to exemplify the work that he and other stakeholders are involved in.

The business initiative brings businesses together to have round-table discussions around issues including:

- (1) access to employment
- (2) handling and dealing with bureaucracy
- (3) how to best use the potential of international migration

These round tables are offered in various global regions to not only highlight the perspectives of businesses, but also to give a voice to these particular stakeholders in influencing a way forward.

The Big Cities initiative was put forth as another example of the efforts of the Process. It strives to bring together delegations from capitals/big cities to give an account of their particular perspective of actually implementing policies set out by national governments on the one hand and needing to negotiate with local businesses to ensure conformity with regulations. Thus, inclusion is the motto of this initiative looking at issues such as:

- (1) governance
- (2) citizenship
- (3) policy (in)consistencies

The initiative plans to bring cities together – on a global scale – as a next step.

Overall, The Hague Process promotes perspectives which are informed by a human dimension of international migration employing a metonoic approach.

Following the outline of the workings of The Hague Process Frans Bouwen concluded by asking that if participants had three wishes to advance the migration and development agenda what would they be?

Responses included:

- A more mature debate
- Involvement of a broader group of stakeholders
- The ability to predict how migration patterns would respond to certain policies
- An economic boom to increase demand for migrants
- That developing countries would shout more loudly about their priorities

Concluding Remarks

In summary Richard Black highlighted five points that had recurred throughout the day:

- What are migration and development policies actually about?

Migration and Development polices are not a separate category of policies but related to many other areas.

- What can HMG do ? What can international fora and sending countries do?

Policy development takes place in a number of different fora. The UK government may ultimately have little influence.

- What are the outcomes of migration policy?

There is dissonance around these policies and hence the wish for more predictability of the effects policies may have.

- Significance of public perception

Richard talked about the film made by the Migration DRC showing the lives of Egyptian migrants in Paris as the sort of tool that can change perception. This was shown at the Bologna human rights film festival 'Human Rights Nights'.

- Is it possible to move away from seeing migration as negative?

We spent a lot of the day talking about highlighting potential positive effects but if people have to move to have a decent life that can be problematic. On the other hand migration is not necessarily a positive experience for everyone, migrants can have a very difficult time and policies must bear this in mind too.